

Memorandum

TO: NJT Employees

FROM: Laura M. Wooding, RN, BSN, COHN-S, Director of Medical Services

DATE: December 6, 2017

SUBJECT: Legionella Bacterium

On November 17, 2016 the New York City Health Department notified guests of the Hotel Pennsylvania that the hotel was working on the water system because two guests of the hotel have been reported sick with Legionnaires' Disease within the past 12 months. Subsequently the New Jersey Transit Medical Services Department was made aware of the same. It is our understanding that these were frequent travelers who had traveled all over Europe and there is no indication of any issues at Hotel Pennsylvania. However, because of employee concerns I want to share with you some general information concerning the disease. In addition, I want to tell you what we are currently doing here at New Jersey Transit to ensure all necessary steps are taken to address health concerns.

Legionellosis, or Legionnaire's disease, is a type of pneumonia caused by Legionnaires' disease bacteria (LDB). Legionnaires' disease is not contagious, and you cannot catch it from another person. The bacteria are common and grow in water. People often receive low-level exposure in the environment without getting sick. Legionellosis usually occurs only when someone who is already susceptible receives concentrated exposure to the bacteria. Persons who are heavy smokers, elderly, or whose ability to resist infection is reduced are more likely to contract Legionnaires' disease than healthy nonsmokers. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, there are between 10,000 and 50,000 cases of Legionnaires' disease every year in the U.S. Most cases of legionellosis are isolated and are not associated with an outbreak. To date, zero cases of the disease have been reported among those employees who were at risk of exposure after having been a guest at the Hotel Pennsylvania. For more information about Legionnaires' disease please review the attached Fact Sheet or visit the CDC website <https://www.cdc.gov/legionella/index.html>.

To identify any other cases, we will continue to review sick-leave records. Employees who took more than three consecutive days of sick leave will be identified, and we will attempt to determine if any in that group experienced pneumonia-like symptoms (fever, shortness of breath, cough). Those who used three or more consecutive days of sick leave during this period may be contacted by a member of the Medical Services Clinical Team for a brief interview. If you experienced a pneumonia-like illness in the past two months but used fewer than three consecutive days of sick leave, contact the Medical Services Department @ 973-378-6072 to arrange an interview.

To assure that you are being protected during the interim, we are also instituting a medical surveillance program to identify any new or old cases. Part of this surveillance will be to ask you a few questions about your illness when you return from an absence of 3 or more consecutive sick days. In addition, we are offering counseling and employee information services. If you would like to take advantage of these services or want more information, contact NJT Medical Services @ 973-378-6072 or the NJT Employee Assistance Program @ 732-290-0368. For the present, please pay attention to the following important points:

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NOW:

1. If you are not sick, there is no need for you to see a doctor.
2. If you are now sick with a cough and fever:
 - a. See your doctor.
 - b. Tell your healthcare provider that you were a guest in a hotel that received notice of 2 reported cases of Legionnaires' disease within the last 12 months.
 - c. If you see a physician, notify NJT Medical Services so that your illness can be tracked.

If you have any additional concerns or questions about this matter, please contact Medical Services. Your health and safety are of great concern to us, and we will be grateful for your cooperation in this matter. As further information develops we will keep you informed.

LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE

Legionnaires' (LEE-juh-nares) disease is a very serious type of pneumonia (lung infection) caused by bacteria called *Legionella*. If you develop pneumonia symptoms and may have been exposed to *Legionella*, see a doctor right away. Be sure to mention if you have used a hot tub, spent any nights away from home, or stayed in a hospital in the last two weeks.

Legionnaires' Disease Can Cause Pneumonia Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of Legionnaires' disease can include:

- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Muscle aches
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Fever

Doctors use chest x-rays or physical exams to check for pneumonia. Your doctor may also order tests on a sample of urine and sputum (phlegm) to see if your lung infection is caused by *Legionella*.

Legionnaires' Disease Is Serious, but Can Be Treated with Antibiotics

Legionnaires' disease is treated with antibiotics (drugs that kill bacteria in the body). Most people who get sick need care in a hospital but make a full recovery. However, about 1 out of 10 people who get Legionnaires' disease will die from the infection.

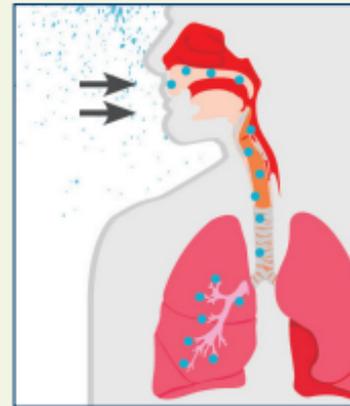
Certain People Are at Increased Risk for Legionnaires' Disease

Most healthy people do not get Legionnaires' disease after being exposed to *Legionella*. Being 50 years or older or having certain risk factors can increase your chances of getting sick. These risk factors include:

- ▶ Being a current or former smoker
- ▶ Having chronic lung disease, such as emphysema or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- ▶ Having a weakened immune system from diseases like cancer, diabetes, or kidney failure
- ▶ Taking medication that weakens your immune system

Legionella Are Usually Spread through Water Droplets in the Air

In nature, *Legionella* live in fresh water and rarely cause illness. In man-made settings, *Legionella* can grow if water is not properly maintained. These man-made water sources become a health problem when small droplets of water that contain the bacteria get into the air and people breathe them in. In rare cases, someone breathes in *Legionella* while they are drinking water and it "goes down the wrong pipe" into the lungs. You can't catch Legionnaires' disease from someone else. You also can't get someone else sick if you have it.



Legionnaires' disease, a type of severe pneumonia, is caused by breathing in small droplets of water that contain *Legionella*.

Common Sources of Infection

Outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease are often associated with large or complex water systems, like those found in hospitals, hotels, and cruise ships.

The most likely sources of infection include:

